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BUI DIEM

VIET-NAM

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Mandatory Review

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Bui Diem is Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; i.e., deputy to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Tran Van Do. To some extent his title is merely honorific, for his most substantive duties are as political advisor to Prime Minister Ky. Bui Diem likes to be called the "McGeorge Bundy of Viet-Nam". Many influential Vietnamese regard him with suspicion as an alleged opportunist and schemer. He has frequent contact with high American officials in Saigon, who have found him an effective intermediary to and from the Prime Minister.

Born in North Viet-Nam in 1923, Bui Diem studied at the Universities of Hanoi and Grenoble, France. Like General Thang, he has a baccalaureate degree in mathematics. He has long been connected with newspaper publishing: first with the newspaper Quoc Dan in Hanoi from 1951 to 1954, and since 1963 as publisher of the English-language Saigon Post. While he has not openly identified himself with the Dai Viet party, Bui Diem has long had the reputation of Dai Viet activist. He was a close associate of former Prime Minister Phan Huy Quat, serving in the latter's Cabinet during February-June 1965 as Minister of State at the Prime Ministry. In 1953 he was Director of Cabinet of the Defense Ministry, then headed by Quat. For some time he served as Quat's confidential secretary.

Although Bui Diem was not an openly active participant in political affairs during the presidency of Ngo Dinh Diem, he was considered to be in sympathy with the Buddhist protest movement and opposed to the Ngo family. During this period Bui Diem was president of a motion picture production company. After the coup d'etat of November 1, 1963, Bui Diem served on the Council of Notables, was reportedly engaged in attempts to form a

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Buddhist political party, and supported the Buddhist opposition which brought down the Tran Van Huong Government in January 1965.

Bui Diem visited the United States for two months in the summer of 1964 under a Department leader grant. In March 1966, he visited Tokyo on a goodwill mission. In May and October 1966, Diem visited the United States on diplomatic assignments.

Bui Diem speaks fluent English and French. He is a witty and entertaining conversationalist. He seems to have a wide range of interests and to enjoy the company of Americans. Bui Diem is married and has two daughters.

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